

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

JANUARY 11, 2006

PRESENT: Laura Sherman, John Luginbuhl, Eric Santini, Tim Olmsted (arr. 7:03 pm), and Alternates Laurie Fiore and Lori Holden

ABSENT: Anna Sanko

STAFF

PRESENT: Rob Phillips, Town Planner and Reanna Goodreau, Recording Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Vice Chairman Sherman called the Economic Development Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS: NONE

III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

THE COMMISSION WENT OUT OF AGENDA ORDER.

2. Farm Initiatives— Discussion with John Hoffman from the Farmer's Market Association

John Hoffman, Ellington Farmer's Market Association, stated that the former First Selectman asked what type of things the Association would need for next year's market. Mr. Hoffman stated that they were requested by customers to have a handicapped parking space close to the market area. The Association would also like more permanent signage. Vice Chairman Sherman stated that the Economic Development Commission has agreed to fund the signage for the market. The EDC and Mr. Hoffman discussed the placement of the sign and Commissioner Luginbuhl agreed that he would speak with the Public Works Director to see if they could use the area under the existing Brookside Park sign during the weekends when the market is operating. It was agreed that the EDC would work with Mr. Hoffman in order to secure signage for the Farmer's Market.

1. Tax Abatement Application: Soapstone Valley Equipment, Inc.—450 Somers Road

Arlo Hoffman, Soapstone Valley Equipment, stated that he has built a 6,400 square foot showroom for antique cars that he sells. He noted that he has done the business out of the existing shop for the past three years and that since the business has taken off, he decided to

build a showroom. Mr. Hoffman described the facility as an open shell and noted that there are no repairs done in the building.

Vice Chairman Sherman stated that the abatement is usually given to targeted businesses, but that there are some exceptions, based on capital brought in for taxation purposes.

Commissioner Olmsted noted that the abatement doesn't currently target auto dealerships. Mr. Hoffman stated that he has added 25% capital into his business in the last year and expects to do the same this year. He explained that the new building cost about \$200,000 to build, which a lot was done by himself. He noted that there are no offices in the building, there is no plumbing, it is heated, there is a cement floor, it is a steel building with 8' paneling and room for up to 25 cars for display.

MOVED (OLMSTED), SECONDED (LUGINBUHL) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO FORWARD THE TAX ABATEMENT APPLICATION FOR SOAPSTONE VALLEY EQUIPMENT, INC. TO THE TAX ABATEMENT REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

2. Discussion with Tom Marano of Northeast Utilities ECD re: QuickTracts, Growth Management Strategy, and CBI

Tom Marano explained that he has written Growth Management Strategies for many towns. He handed-out a packet of growth management tools.

Mr. Marano also explained the QuickTracts program. He explained that speed is important to developers and are typically looking for "shovel ready sites" or sites that they can get approvals for in approximately 30-45 days. The program asks that towns look at sites that meet a certain criteria and if the town has a site or sites, that they sign a non-binding agreement that the town will make the best effort to have the approval quickly.

Vice Chairman Sherman asked about the success rate of program and was told that 5 of the 40 sites have been matched with site selectors/developers. Mr. Marano stated that Ellington is at an advantage because there is so much flat land. Commissioner Santini asked if the developers were considering the state permits when looking at timing for approvals and was told that this timeframe is only for the local process and that the developers understand that there are different timeframes to secure permits that are out the local jurisdiction.

Mr. Marano explained the importance of having as much information on the town website as possible, so that if a site selector is looking at particular site, they can get the information they want without having to search many places. He also stressed the importance of having the EDDI website information filled out as much as possible since many site selectors use that website.

Mr. Marano finished his discussion with a slide presentation on a case study of the Town of Guilford.

THE COMMISSION RETURNED TO ORIGINAL AGENDA ORDER.

III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

3. Update on MetroHartford Alliance CEDS project

Rob Phillips explained that he attended a meeting on the CEDS project in October. He stated that the report should be finalized soon. Tom Marano stated that the report actually needs more work and will not be done when originally anticipated. He explained that the reasoning for the CEDS is to obtain money for public works projects, such as sewer extensions, through federal funding. This study was necessary in order to obtain these federal funds.

4. CEDAS: Camera Friendly Communities—Update

Vice Chairman Sherman stated that she needs to meet with Anna Sanko, who is resigning, to obtain any information she has for this initiative.

TABLED TO THE FEBRUARY 8, 2006 MEETING.

5. Tax Abatement Policies/Procedures—Update

Reanna Goodreau stated that since Rick Cleary has resigned from the commission and there is a new town attorney, she would like the new town attorney to review the document. She also noted that Chairman Cleary was supposed to coordinate with the Building Official regarding the issues he raised. Ms. Goodreau suggested having the new chairman review the status of the updates to the tax abatement policies/procedures.

6. Review of the Economic Development Chapter of the Current Plan of Conservation & Development & Zoning Regulations

Mr. Phillips stated that he is meeting with the First Selectman, Board of Finance Chairman, and Bruce Hoben of Planimetrics, to move the updates to the Plan of Conservation and Development along.

TABLED TO THE FEBRUARY 8, 2006 MEETING.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Tax Abatement Application: Syn-Mar Products, Inc.—5 Nutmeg Drive

Ms. Goodreau suggested that the applicant not attend this meeting so the commission could first discuss the application. Commissioner Luginbuhl stated that Syn-Mar manufactures showers, counters, etc. Ms. Goodreau explained that they are proposing to build a 27,000 square foot building. The commission agreed that they would like applicant to come to the February meeting and have information about the capital they are bringing in.

CONTINUED TO THE FEBRUARY 8, 2006 MEETING.

3. Medical Business Subcommittee—Update

Commissioner Olmsted stated that he will talk to local doctors about the possibility of some type of medical facility in Ellington.

TABLED TO THE FEBRUARY 8, 2006 MEETING.

4. Business Survey— Review of Results

Commissioner Holden stated that she combined the responses in order to compile results of the survey. She noted that not all people answered all questions. She reviewed the results with the commission. Commissioner Holden noted that the major items she saw in the survey were obtaining permits was difficult, high taxes are a major issue and the Town Hall is not helpful. Commissioner Santini explained that as a developer, it would be helpful to have a handout so that everyone knows what to expect during the different processes. The commission agreed that a formal narrative of the results should be sent to the Board of Selectmen for their review. Commissioner Olmstead suggested doing the survey every year in order to benchmark progress.

5. Discussion of Economic Development Data & Information (EDDI)

Ms. Goodreau explained that EDDI is a website that allows towns to post certain information in order for site selectors/developers to see if the town is what they are looking for. The information included on the website includes contacts for economic development, form of government, quality of life items, such as school information, leading employers, etc. Ms. Goodreau noted that she is currently working on updating existing information by working with other town staff to accomplish this.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. Election of Officers

Commission members wanted additional time to consider this item.

TABLED TO THE FEBRUARY 8, 2006 MEETING.

2. Approval of the November 9, 2005 Meeting Minutes

MOVED (OLMSTED), SECONDED (SANTINI) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 9, 2005 MEETING MINUTES.

3. Correspondence:

- a. Highlights from the Freedom of Information Act
- b. CT Business, November/December 2005

SO NOTED.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

**MOVED (LUGINBUHL), SECONDED (SANTINI) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO
ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:45 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Reanna Goodreau
Recording Secretary